



# Sight loss and computing



This factsheet helps you to use computers if you have sight loss.

# How to use this factsheet



We are **AbilityNet**.



We help disabled people to use technology. For example, computers and tablets.



This is an Easy Read factsheet.  
You may still need help to read it.  
Ask someone you know to help you.



For more information you can phone or email us.



Phone **0800 048 7642**



Email **[enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk)**

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# 1. What is this factsheet about



This factsheet tells you about technology that can help you if you have sight loss.



In the UK there are nearly 2 million people who are blind or have some sight loss.



There are lots of things you can do to make your tablet, computer and smartphone more accessible if you have sight loss.



This can help you

- at home
- at work
- in education.

## 2. Digital personal assistants



A **digital personal assistant** is a computer programme or device which is connected to the internet.

You can get digital personal assistants on your tablet and smartphone.



**Siri** and **Google Assistant** are digital personal assistants.



You can ask digital personal assistants to do things like

- answer a question
- set a reminder
- make a note
- send a message or phone someone.



### 3. Screen readers for computers



Most new computers and smartphones have a **screen reader** built into them.

A screen reader reads text out loud.



**VoiceOver** is the screen reader on Apple Macs, iPads and iPhones.



**Narrator** is the screen reader for computers or smartphones that use Microsoft Windows.



If you read Braille you can use screenreaders to send text to a Braille display.



# 4. Making things on your screen bigger



To see the screen more easily you can **magnify** it.

Magnify means make bigger.



You can change the settings on your **web browser** and on your computer to make the text easier to read.

A web browser is what you use to visit websites.



For example, you can

- change the colours
- change the size of the text
- change how you see information
- change how the mouse looks.



You can zoom in to make the screen bigger.

# 5. Screen magnifier software



You can also use **screen magnifier software**.

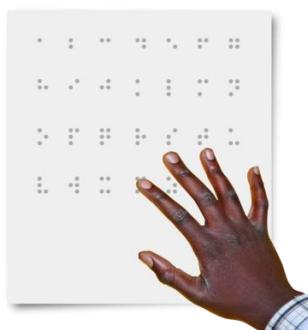
This software makes everything on your computer screen bigger.



## Microsoft Windows

Here are some screen magnifiers which you can use on Microsoft Windows computers

- Zoom Text Magnifier Reader
- Dolphin Supernova Magnifier.



If you read Braille, you can use Dolphin Supernova with Braille displays.



## Apple

Here are some screen magnifier for Apple computers

- ZoomTextMac
- MagniLink iMax.

# 6. Keyboards that are easier to use



## High visibility keyboards

You can buy keyboards with bigger letters.



Or you can buy stickers to put on your keyboard.



## Larger keys

It can be easier to type if you use a special keyboard with larger keys.

For example

- BigKeys
- KeyMonster.



## Specialist keyboards

You can buy keyboards that work with special software.

For example

- Dolphin Large Print
- The Jumbo Keyboard.

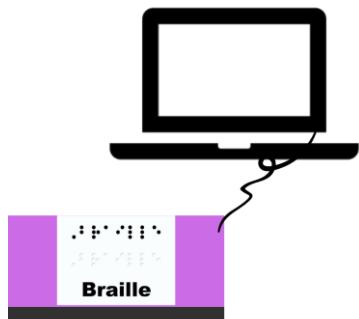
## Chording keyboards

These are for people who cannot move their fingers.

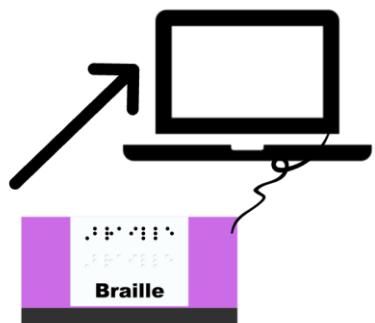


They have a few keys that you press together to make the letters. 9

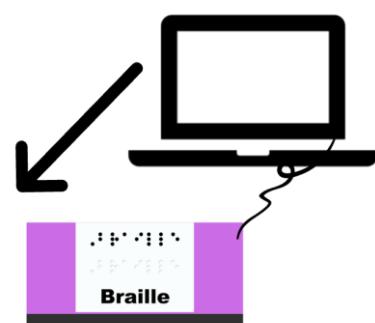
# 7. Braille displays



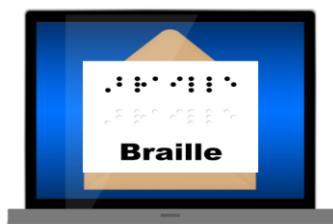
A Braille display is a device that is connected to a computer.



It means you can control your computer using Braille.



Your computer can also send text to Braille displays.



This means you can read your emails and websites on your Braille display.

## 8. Touch typing



There are lots of software programmes that can teach you to **touch type**.



**Touch typing** is when you can type without looking at the keyboard.



Here are some touch typing software that you can get

- Azabat Touch-Typing Tutor
- Portset Touch Typing Tutor
- Engishtype Senior.



You can use Engishtype Senior on Apple Mac computers.



We have a factsheet on Accessible changes for your keyboard and mouse.

# 9. Machines that read out loud



A reading machine can read words out loud.

The machine scans the writing.  
It can then

- display it on the screen
- and read it out aloud.



There are three types of reading machines.

**1. Standalone reading machines**  
These are easy to use but can cost a lot of money.



**2. Reading machines that connect to your computer.**



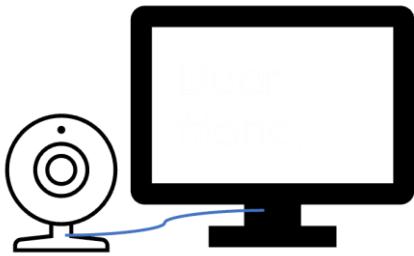
**3. Portable reading machines.**  
This means they are easy to carry.



You can also get apps for smartphones and tablets.

These apps are much cheaper than a reading machine.

# 10. Video magnifiers



Video magnifiers connect a camera to a screen.

They are like reading machines.



## Desktop video magnifiers

These can make the text really big.  
You can change the background colour.



## Video magnifiers that are easy to carry

These video magnifiers can help you see text from far away.



## Pocket video magnifiers

These can fit in your pocket.  
They are good for reading menus and timetables.



There are lots of apps that can magnify documents.

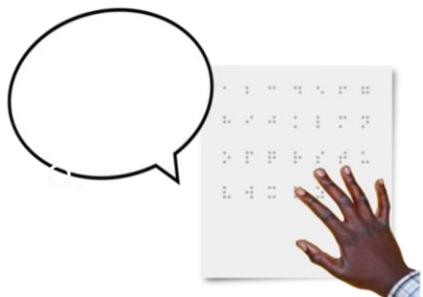
They use the camera on the phone or tablet to scan the page and read the words out loud.

# 11. Notetakers



A notetaker is a small computer made for people who have sight loss.

You can connect it to a computer or printer or Braille printer.



You can have information read out loud.

You can have information sent to a Braille display.



- You can use them for emails and for going online.
- Notetakers have a calendar and an address book.
- Their batteries last longer than most computers.



- Notetakers cost more money than a normal computer.
- Notetakers can only do a few things.

# 12. Some useful apps



## Seeing AI

This is a free app for Apple devices. It can recognise faces, objects, words and barcodes.



## Be My Eyes

This app links you with a sighted volunteer. It uses the camera on your device so you can ask a volunteer something. For example, 'what colour is my hat?'



## KNFB Reader

You can use KNFB Reader to read any words. For example, letters, menus, books. It can read them out loud or send them to a Braille display.



## Talking Goggles

This app can understand any image or words in seconds.

It says out loud what it sees. For example, signs, logos, artwork and words.



## Evi

You can ask the Evi app questions by talking to it.

Evi can say the answers out loud.



## iBrailler Notes

This is an easy way for you to type Braille notes onto your iPad.



## Google Maps



## AccessNote

This app is a notetaker for Apple phones and tablets.

It uses VoiceOver.



## Vokul

Vokul is a personal assistant for Apple phones and tablets.



## Synapptic

Synapptic is software for Android tablets and smartphones.

You can use it for emails, websites, photos, and other things.



## Guide Connect

Guide Connect is software that works on computers and TVs.

You can use it for emails, websites, and radio.



## In Your Pocket

In Your Pocket is an easy way to access the RNIB library and RNIB Newsagent.

It is a device from the RNIB that can also make phone calls.



## Kapsys

This is an Android smartphone that is easy to use.

It has an accessible design.

# 13. Information for employers and employees



The law says your employer must make **reasonable adjustments** for disabled people.



A reasonable adjustment is changing the way your employer usually does things to make sure people can do their job.



If you have sight loss your employer should make your work and the workplace accessible for you.

For example, by giving you training.

We think some good places for training are

- The Blind Geek Zone
- Blind Bargains
- AppleVis
- VIP Software Guides
- Vision Australia podcasts



# 14. Useful contacts



## RNIB

The RNIB is a national charity that gives advice to people with sight loss.

They also have an online shop selling things that help people with sight loss.

[www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)



## Technology Association of Visually Impaired people (TAVIP)

This is a community of people with sight loss who use computers.

[www.tavip.org.uk](http://www.tavip.org.uk)



## Royal National College for the Blind (RNC)

The RNC is a college for people with sight loss.

Students can stay overnight.

[www.rnc.ac.uk](http://www.rnc.ac.uk)

# 15. Places you can get equipment



## Adapt-IT

[www.adapt-it.co.uk](http://www.adapt-it.co.uk)  
[sales@adapt-it.co.uk](mailto:sales@adapt-it.co.uk)  
0208 736 0542

## CyKey

**Bellaire Electronics**  
[www.cykey.co.uk](http://www.cykey.co.uk)

01271 324 759

Bellaire makes chording keyboards.



## Enabling Technology

[www.enablingtechnology.com](http://www.enablingtechnology.com)  
[info@enablingtechnology.com](mailto:info@enablingtechnology.com)  
01785 243 111



## Hands-Free Computing

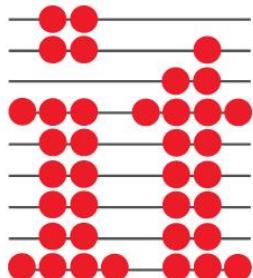
[www.hands-free.co.uk](http://www.hands-free.co.uk)  
0845 899 0880

Hands-Free also do training.



## **Humanware**

[www.humanware.com](http://www.humanware.com)  
info@humanware.com  
01933 415 800



## **Inclusive Technology**

[www.inclusive.co.uk/hardware](http://www.inclusive.co.uk/hardware)  
inclusive@inclusive.co.uk  
01457 819 790



## **Keytools**

[www.keytools.co.uk/products/](http://www.keytools.co.uk/products/)  
keytools@hypertec.co.uk  
0844 879 2282



## **Optelec (part of Vispero)**

[www.lowvisionshop.co.uk](http://www.lowvisionshop.co.uk)  
0800 145 6115



## **Portset**

[www.portset.co.uk](http://www.portset.co.uk)  
01489 893 919

Portset make EnglishType software.



## **Professional Vision Services**

[www.professional-vision-services.co.uk](http://www.professional-vision-services.co.uk)  
[sales@professional-vision-services.co.uk](mailto:sales@professional-vision-services.co.uk)  
01462 420751

**R N I B**



## **RNIB**

[www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)  
[Helpline.mailbox@rnib.org.uk](mailto:Helpline.mailbox@rnib.org.uk)  
0303 123 9999



## **Sight and Sound Technology**

[www.sightandsound.co.uk](http://www.sightandsound.co.uk)  
[info@sightandsound.co.uk](mailto:info@sightandsound.co.uk)  
01604 798 070

## **Synapptic**

[www.synapptic.com](http://www.synapptic.com)  
[sales@synapptic.com](mailto:sales@synapptic.com)  
0191 909 7 909



## **VisionAid**

[www.visionaid.co.uk](http://www.visionaid.co.uk)  
[info@visionaid.co.uk](mailto:info@visionaid.co.uk)  
01775 711 977

# 16. How AbilityNet can help you



## My Computer My Way

The **My Computer My Way** website explains how to make your computer, tablet and smartphone accessible.

Website **mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk**



## Advice and information

If you have any questions you can contact us at AbilityNet.

- Phone **0800 048 7642**
- Email **enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk**



## IT support at Home

AbilityNet volunteers can help you with your computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone.



If you need support at home, you can book an AbilityNet volunteer to visit you.

**[www.abilitynet.org.uk](http://www.abilitynet.org.uk)**